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ABSTRACT

This report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the Pan-Commonwealth Experts meeting of 1986. The purpose of the meeting was to review the experience of institutional links which facilitate systematic cooperation between academic and research institutions and contribute to international development throughout the British Commonwealth in Asia. First, the report summarizes the various oral presentations and papers presented at the meeting. Next, the report outlines two working group discussions on institutional links within the framework of higher educational cooperation as well as the aims, content, and organization of these links. Finally, a summary of the meeting's findings and conclusions are presented in four areas: (1) institutional links within the framework of higher education cooperation; (2) aims, content, and organization of links; (3) south-south cooperation; and (4) Centers of Excellence. Appendices contain the meeting agenda, a list of papers that were presented and tabled, some guidelines for ensuring satisfactory operation of links, and criteria for Centers of Excellence. (GLR)

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Institutional Links in Higher Education in Commonwealth Asia

A Pan-Commonwealth Experts Meeting

Bangalore, India, 2-5 February 1986

FINAL REPORT

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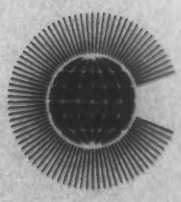

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January 1987

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FINAL REPORT

EXPERTS MEETING ON INSTITUTIONAL LINKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ASIAN REGION OF THE COMMONWEALTH

BANGALORE, INDIA

2-5 FEBRUARY 1986

Commonwealth Secretariat
Human Resource Development Group
Education Programme

January 1987

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Rationale

The Fourth Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, **Commonwealth Student Mobility: The Way Forward**, emphasised the importance of more direct exchanges of experience between participants in link activities in the Commonwealth, including not only institutions of higher education in the North and South, but also the main financial sponsors of links. The latter would include the International Development Office of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education in Britain. The Report of the Standing Committee was broadly endorsed by the Education Ministers meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October 1985. Subsequently, the Education Programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat convened a meeting on Institutional Links in Higher Education in the Asian Region of the Commonwealth in Bangalore, India in February 1986.

2. The Overall Goals

The meeting's broad aims were to review the experience of institutional links throughout the Commonwealth which facilitate systematic co-operation between academic and research institutions and which contribute to international development. The intention was to review past and present links and then to assess new initiatives in higher education co-operation, whether on a North-South, South-South or even a North-South-South basis. The meeting proposed to review critically various link objectives and to assess the achievements of such links. It was hoped the meeting would, additionally, frame some guiding principles in formulating and implementing link activities not only by the institutions themselves, but also by bilateral agencies which often sponsored such links.

3. The Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of the meeting were:

(a) to review the objectives and achievements of various institutional links, on a North-South and South-South basis, within the Commonwealth;
(b) to assess the nature of North-South links between institutions, and the degree to which equal exchange and mutual benefit have resulted;
(c) to identify examples of institutionl links that have promoted long-term staff development and facilitated building centres of excellence;
(d) to compare the different styles and modes of institutional co-operation supported by Australia, Britain and Canada, inter alia, and to consider the lessons that can be learned from their varied experience;

(e) to evaluate exchanges between institutions within the Commonwealth South and their potential scope for expansion; to determine whether models of North-South linkages are appropriately applied to South-South linkages and if so, what types of modifications are necessary; to identify the best way of funding South-South links;

(f) to determine the most appropriate level for institutional linkages in different circumstances, taking into account the particular advantages of links at the departmental, faculty, or institutional level;

(g) to assess the scope for research co-operation, and to identify the conditions under which it thrives best.

Although participants in the meeting represented experience throughout the Commonwealth, attention for the most part focussed on initiatives within the Asian region of the Commonwealth.

4. Beneficiaries and Participants

Participants included policy makers, planners and administrators at education ministries and higher education institutions, as well as aid agency officials. (See Appendix V).

It was hoped that their conclusions would be of some help to their colleagues in similar posts throughout the Commonwealth, and to aid agencies involved in link programme support. The report has been submitted (in draft) to the Standing Committee on Student Mobility, which met for the fifth time in London in August 1986. It will be presented to the Tenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Nairobi in July 1987.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Lead and Substantive Papers

The lead paper on **Institutional Links: A Commonwealth Challenge** was presented by **Dr Kenneth King**. The paper begins by identifying the potential of institutional links, with particular emphasis on developmental links. In the last two years, links and academic exchanges have featured on the agenda of meetings on higher education co-operation and some meetings were noted. Institutional links have become an important mechanism for higher education co-operation not only in the Commonwealth but also across the European Community, in North and South America and the Caribbean, inter alia.

Discussions of academic links activities currently focus more on North-South (or East-West), rather than on North-North (or West-West) collaboration. Increasing emphasis, however, is being given to the potential of South-South links. North-South links depend on funding from the North, whilst South-South links, because of their potential cost-effectiveness, can be funded by the institutions involved in the link partnership. Many South-South links are of course still externally funded.

Links between North-South institutions have the advantage not only of reducing the isolation of institutions in the South, but also of helping to widen the scope and perspective of institutions in developing Commonwealth countries.

Links can help to disseminate South institutions' research through specialist research meetings, educational abstracting systems, and/or through syntheses of regional research. However, link schemes which emphasise the importance of collaborative research should not just serve the objectives of North researchers wishing to carry out research in the South.

Donor agencies are concerned that projects funded by them may be in jeopardy because of inefficient management of human resources in the recipient country or institution. Thus a strategy has emerged which attempts to secure 'investment protection' for projects, resulting in 'a whole series of isolated donor projects in their little enclaves'.

On the other hand, Dr King argues that there must be more concern for the well-being of the wider institutional infrastructure in which individual link projects are located. Academic links should not focus exclusively on research and development. Instead they should have a broader focus, spilling out from the academic departments where they are based, to address the problems of faculty and institution. This concern with the broader framework and not just with the specific link project may serve to make link schemes more comprehensive and more relevant to the institutional and national environment.

Dr King emphasises the strong tendency to prefer academic links which directly serve national development priorities, at least on the part of aid agencies. Such preferences invariably highlight the training role to be played by the North institution on behalf of the South institution. South institutions are

usually characterised as recipients of advice , training, expert assistance, new technologies and techniques. Although 'stress on the end relationship may be necessary for the language of project documents, and may be justified in the very obvious fragility of the academic milieu in a number of countries', the paper points out that 'there is a great deal more scope for mutual benefit in a development link than the language of the agreements would suggest'.

Successful links have often evolved from personal contacts, and this factor is likely to remain crucial. However, if links are to be regarded as instruments of policy (a mechanism for delivering development assistance) or as something that can be 'packaged, projectised and prioritised', then there is real danger that the vital personal element may be submerged, particularly where large link schemes are amalgamated and formalised.

Dr King concludes by calling for a Commonwealth fund for more intensive co-operation in the core disciplines of history, law, literature, politics and economics, reasoning that a good balance between development and Commonwealth disciplines will lead to ordinary as contrasted with development-aided academic interchange.

J Edward Greene's paper, **North-South Linkages in Higher Education: Toward the Development of Centres of Excellence in the South**, examines linkages in the context of North-South relations generally and identifies the complexity of co-operative arrangements that exist at bilateral, multi-lateral and non-governmental levels. The author highlights the widening gap in economic performance between developing and advanced countries and the failure of economies to grow in spite of the rising educational attainment of the populations in the South.

Attempts that have been made to establish centres of excellence in the Commonwealth South have not been as successful as they might have been, so that the dependence of the institutions in the South on those in the North has been perpetuated.

There are, however, several examples of viable South-South networks which respond to development needs of the regions and sub-regions within which they function. For example, UNESCO supports networks for sharing educational innovations among regional groups in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Arab States. These networks operate with UNDP support through national institutions in each region. They facilitate joint research, information and documentation exchange, staff training, sub-regional and regional training courses and group study tours.

Dr Greene raises the issue of whether there is less need to establish traditional universities based on Western models in the Commonwealth South, than to create new types of indigenous institutions of higher learning that have direct relevance to the development needs of the South. Notable examples of the latter are the Delhi School of Economics, the Institute of Economic Growth in Delhi, the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

Care must be taken in attempting to classify link arrangements and in assessing whether shifts in the characteristics of these linkages over time lead to positive or negative developments in the educational systems of the South. The author concludes by stressing the need to assess the extent to which institutions in the South have embarked on innovative schemes and with what success.

Professor V G Kulkarni presented a paper entitled **The Role of Institutional Linkages in Promoting Education** which points out that although development assistance has been institutionalised over the past three decades, the success of the Marshall Plan experience in the reconstruction of modern Europe is not being repeated in the South despite considerable capital and technical contributions.

The countries of the Commonwealth South face enormous problems in developing human and material resources. The models of the North are often not appropriate. On the other hand, a number of developing countries have achieved considerable progress in several areas like agriculture, adult education and non-formal education and by setting up centres of excellence for research and development in science and technology. The difficulties they surmounted provide useful lessons for other developing countries. Thus mutual collaboration can be fruitful in helping to strengthen areas of academic weakness.

In conclusion, Professor Kulkarni makes five specific recommendations: that about twenty-five centres in both developed and developing countries be identified on the basis of their commitment to research and development in science education, that a network be established among these institutions with a view to producing a journal to disseminate and encourage discussion as well as to describe useful case studies in science and technology education, that people should be exchanged amongst centres, that the responsibility for collating and analysing information be confided to two or three of the centres and, that a meeting of key people from each centre take place every two years along the lines of the one organised by the Institute of Pedagogy in the Third World held in Frankfurt in 1984.

2. Country Papers and Discussion

Country specific papers and oral presentations on institutional links followed the lead and substantive papers. **Dr Hena Mukherjee** from Malaysia presented a paper on the University of Malaya, noting that it was conceived and structured along the same lines as traditional British universities, and that it has developed and continues to maintain links with major British and other Commonwealth universities. Currently, the University also has an extremely varied range of links with Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth institutions in developed and developing nations. Centres within the University such as the Institute of Advanced Studies and the Language Centre undertake fairly extensive applied research projects. Some of these research projects, particularly those which are externally funded, are linked with a foreign academic or research institution. Institutions from non-Commonwealth countries such as Japan and Germany have become involved in some of these link projects too.

The development of Commonwealth universities in the South, however, has received a severe blow because of the current economic recession. Therefore, funding agencies, Dr Mukherjee suggests should consider making allocations in the following ways:

- basing them on specific project topics in which interested scholars from various institutions may participate; and
- making funds available to groups of universities in countries

or regions which will jointly decide on projects and so work together.

The University of Malaya is of the view that the present pattern of link-formulation, based on research activities that originate from individual or group interests, has proved to be the most functional and fruitful.

The paper on **Institutional Links - Sri Lankan Experience** was presented by **Professor A D V de S Indraratna**. He emphasised that the current links between higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka and other Commonwealth countries are a very effective instrument for promoting educational interchange and co-operation. Through the initiative of the University Grants Commission since its establishment in January 1979, there has been an increasing effort on the part of Sri Lankan higher education institutions to establish links with corresponding foreign institutions.

Presently, there are more than thirty-four arrangements between Sri Lankan institutions and various external tertiary institutions of which eight are with Commonwealth higher educational institutions, three with Britain, three with Canada, one with Australia and one other. Six of the eight links are externally financed. The avowed goals and objectives of these links are (a) staff development and skill training (b) collaborative research (c) staff exchange (d) curriculum development and (e) the establishment and development of centres of excellence.

Links have greatly enhanced the teaching and research of Sri Lankan institutions. They have also helped to promote student mobility and educational interchange and co-operation between countries of the Commonwealth.

Professor S Krishnaswamy in his paper entitled **North-South Linkages in Higher Education: The Indian Experience**, points out that since independence, Indian higher education institutions have been fostering formal and informal linkages with their counterparts in many developed and developing countries. In the beginning the Indian policy on links emphasised the training of Indian academics and researchers.

The Indo-British Universities Collaboration Programme which was conceived during discussions held in January 1971 between the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas of Britain and the University Grants Commission of India is the most notable Commonwealth co-operative arrangement of Indian higher education institution. This programme emphasises academic collaboration between two equal partners in areas of higher studies and research without involving provision of equipment or books. The areas for collaboration are identified after exploratory visits by senior faculty members of the participating universities in the two countries. The main objective of this programme is to provide opportunities for improving standards of teaching (including curriculum development and newer techniques of teaching and evaluation) as well as to take up joint research programmes in areas of mutual interest. The scheme provides for the development of a focal point of collaboration with a particular university in Britain. Under this collaborative programme fifteen bilateral links between universities/ institutions in India and their counterparts in Britain have been agreed upon in specific areas. Work has already started on eleven of them. On the British side priority is given to those subjects which are generally but not exclusively in scientific and technical fields (including agriculture and education) in which collaborative programmes of teaching and research could have developmental attributes.

Mr L R Mal of the University Grants Commission of India pointed out that the Commission has been emphasising the development of institutional linkages between India and foreign countries in very specific areas as an important component in the development of co-operation in higher education. The Commission has not encouraged comprehensive agreements between universities in India and those in foreign countries, since such agreements are not considered to be academically viable, given that the various disciplines and departments on the two sides might have different levels of excellence in research. Collaboration develops properly if it is undertaken between equal partners. Therefore the Commission has stressed a discipline-based programme of institutional linkages which generally involve the exchange of scholars, exchange of literature and data, joint seminars and implementation of joint research. The Commission has been implementing this programme of institutional linkages with British universities for over a decade and the results have been very encouraging. Programmes are very specific and limited and have helped scholars to improve their professional competence. It would be useful to enhance co-operation in the field of higher education amongst Commonwealth countries through institutional linkages. Mr Mal suggested that contributions by various Commonwealth countries to a centralised fund for implementing this programme would go a long way in fostering further Commonwealth co-operation in higher education.

Dr Shahidullah of Bangladesh in his oral presentation pointed out that universities in Bangladesh had links with several overseas institutions. For example, Dhaka University had linkages with universities in Britain and with the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Unfortunately, training abroad in developed countries was often not very relevant to Bangladesh. However no extensive linkages with developing Commonwealth countries existed at the present time. Dr Shahidullah suggested that university grants commissions in developing Commonwealth countries should come together to form a consortium.

Professor Manrakhan of Mauritius said that links formed through external examinations had been useful. They had helped to provide a continuous review of whole departments. He noted existing links between the University of Mauritius and overseas institutions in biotechnology and energy. Several Commonwealth agencies had supported projects in different subject areas over the years. However, many of these links had not been effective and the involvement of the University of Mauritius in useful link activity needed to be stepped up.

3. Resourcing of Links

At the session entitled **Problems of Resourcing Links: Views from the Funding Agencies** representatives from a number of funding agencies expressed their views on linkage arrangements. **Mr Lewis Perinbam** of the **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)** stressed that agencies like CIDA prefer to call themselves development agencies rather than funding agencies. CIDA is in no way a completely 'free' agent as far as funding decisions are concerned since it is accountable to the Canadian Parliament and therefore to the Canadian people.

CIDA's participation in link activities can be categorised as:

- government-to-government, where the agency acts as an intermediary for procuring specific services for an

institution on a contractual basis; or

- institution-to-institution agreements which are based on joint initiatives from Canadian and developing country institutions, or individual requests from a Canadian institution seeking CIDA's assistance as a partner in a development activity with a developing country institution.

CIDA's interaction with Canadian universities may be characterised in the following ways:-

- the independence and integrity of the institutions and selected approaches to link projects are respected by CIDA;
- the recognised priorities are those of the institutions and not of the Canadian or recipient Governments. (CIDA's developmental activities, however, do not run counter to the policies of Canadian or recipient Governments.);
- CIDA favours projects which exhibit potential for creativity, innovation and sensitivity;
- CIDA requires financial accountability but does not exercise direct fiscal control.

In its development activities CIDA ensures the importance of political expectations and government imperatives by trying to harmonise institutional interests with those of Governments. CIDA needs to orient itself more towards the Commonwealth and Francophone countries of Africa. Countries reinforcing traditional links with Canada as well as justifying economic consideration are seen as legitimate subjects for Canadian interest.

The negative unintended consequences that arise through developmental link relationships can take the following forms:

- a situation where 'process' can become more important than 'substance', bearing in mind that donor agencies are bureaucracies in themselves. In such situations 'petty' bureaucratic considerations can prevent agencies from seeing opportunities when they present themselves; and
- an unhealthy donor-recipient mentality where the knowledge flow is solely from Canada to a passive recipient who contributes nothing to the partnership.

Government-to-Government bilateral relations in CIDA currently focus on 30-35 countries with projects having lasting a few months to three years, depending on their nature.

CIDA functions in a creative way with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) by funding the International Development Office whose aim is to develop linkages between Canadian and Third World institutions and by giving it the responsibility to appraise project proposals on an impartial basis.

The International Development Programme (IDP) of the Australian Universities and Colleges according to **Mr Charles Noble** is involved in a range of individual and institutional activities of variable strength and duration. However, the preference is for institution-to-institution links.The three major agencies which reflect and implement Australia's aid policies are:

- the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) which has a broad role and is responsible for planning and administering aid programmes (ADAB is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is manned by full-time public servants);
- the Department of Trade which looks at education as a marketable commodity helping to rectify the current adverse balance-of-payments situation Australia is facing; and
- the Overseas Students Office (OSO) located in the Department of Education, which has been conceived as a "one-stop shop" for the admission of overseas students.

IDP in its institutional links activities prefers to involve itself with a range of institutions rather than limiting itself to a one-to-one relationship. The Programme feels that the specific needs of institutions are best met by "twinning" arrangements. It offers various arrangements, both short and long-term, to help in the upgrading of institutions in developing countries.

The Representative of the **British Council, Mr John Lawrence** said that the Council has two major sources of funding for its higher education collaboration:

- the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), which is a bilateral Government-to-Government aid programme, solely concerned with the execution of specific programmes between two governments such as the establishment of new institutions, centres, schools, etc, running for periods of several years with fairly large financial input. Assistance decisions will depend on ODA's overall country policy which may or may not include higher education as a priority; and
- the Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education, (CICHE) with the British Council operating as its secretariat or executive arm. CICHE's role extends to cover the whole developing world, not only the developing countries of the Commonwealth.

In this collaboration, an attempt is made to fulfil British interests as well as those of the developing world. British universities and polytechnics have shown increasing interest in collaborating in a wide range of subject areas with various countries. Because of funding constraints and a decreasing capability to second staff to overseas universities for long periods, short-term activities are currently highlighted. There is a trend to charge for services or support activities bringing benefits to British institutions which equal CICHE's contributions.

The British Council pursues a number of objectives through institutional links:

(a) staff development
(b) institutional management
(c) training of technical and library staff

(d) development of new courses at postgraduate level especially part-time and professional development courses
(e) technology transfer
(f) collaborative research.

Before funding is approved for any link activity, the objectives must be defined with some precision and the partners must agree on how to assess whether or not those objectives have been attained.

A link activity may receive support ranging from £500 to £30,000 per annum which suggests that the scope of support to individual projects is limited, calling for monitoring rather than evaluation. The major intention of monitoring is to assess if declared objectives are being met and also to allow for change of objectives where indicated and appropriate.

For the British Council, particular concerns over the next two years include:

- development of policy statements for individual countries; and
- devolvement of the management of country programmes to local British Council officers.

It is expected that the overall budget will remain constant. Link arrangements will be supported, in general, for a three-year minimum period and will be renewed if the project is achieving its objectives.

Finally, CICHE is concerned with the benefits that British institutions can derive through link activities. In particular they are concerned with the intellectual benefits that can be derived through promotional activities aimed at persuading a larger number of overseas students to enrol in British universities, particularly at the postgraduate level.

4. Discussion on Resourcing of Links

During the discussion which followed the formal presentations, a number of issues were raised.

Professor D P Sen Gupta suggested that the steep increase in fees by some of the developed countries of the Commonwealth for overseas students goes against the interest of such countries in attracting overseas students to study and undertake research in their institutions of higher education.

John Lawrence agreed that without an international student representation any university community was impoverished. There were substantial financial reasons for the increase of university fees in Britain. However, the problem might diminish for British universities as other countries moved towards full-cost fees. **Professor Manrakhan** pointed out that many overseas students received assistance in some measure from Britain towards their education costs, through scholarship and award schemes.
Dr Kenneth King commented that in Canada the locus of control was moving towards peer review; conversely in Britain, the British Council's decisions regarding institutions were taken unilaterally without adequate input from British institutions of higher education. In answer to a query from**Dr Edward Green** about British Council's plans for linkage mechanisms in the future, **Mr Lawrence** said that funding agencies must reassess their policies, develop a methodology of monitoring link activities with a view to correcting them where indicated and concentrate on institution building.

Mr Lewis Perinbam responded by saying that while CIDA was in principle required to monitor and evaluate programmes, monitoring was in fact done by

the linked institutions themselves and this was written into the initial agreement. He thought evaluation was important and much was being learned about it as time went on, through the linking process itself

Dr Pourhosseini asked **Mr Charles Noble** if all agencies in Australia saw education as an extension of their trade policy. To this **Mr Noble** replied by saying that agencies do not all have a common objective. In the case of Australia, the International Development Programme operates with universities and colleges in mind; the Department of Trade is market-oriented; while ADAB is still a development agency and the focus of all Australian educational and institutional activities in developing countries.

Mr Peter Williams wondered whether codes of conduct were necessary to prevent distortion in the flow of higher education services from more developed countries to developing countries.

Professor Manrakhan inquired about the extent to which a development-oriented government like Canada could influence decisions about funding by Canadian aid agencies. **Mr Lewis Perinbam** replied that development and funding assistance activities of Canadian aid agencies had been scrutinised by the Canadian government. It was significant that CIDA has not suffered significant cuts in government support as a result. Secondly, the Canadian government recognises that development assistance can function in several different styles; there is room for imagination. Mr Perinbam was convinced that there are large private funds which could be called upon by aid recipient countries and institutions. The spontaneous and overwhelming response to the Ethiopian situation is a case in point. He pointed out that CIDA has skills sufficient to convince the Canadian Parliament that encouraging Canadian private business to co-operate with academic institutions should be seen as an important long-term objective.

Sir Roy Marshall stated categorically that the implementation of full-cost fees had damaged relationships throughout the Commonwealth, the full extent of which has yet to be realised. It was necessary, however, to live with this policy decision. He suggested, further, that the new differentiated fee system which Australia has announced may be more damaging than the British system, where all overseas students pay the same amount unless they receive awards. He put forward the challenge: what are developing countries doing to promote their own interests? For instance, in the CICHE policy statements planned for each target country, it will surely be important to have higher education input which is accurate and comprehensive.

Dr Miles Wisenthal emphasised that while Canada charges higher fees to foreign students it does not charge full-cost fees and thus offers access to higher education for all. Community colleges do collect higher fees from foreign students, but in many provinces such fees are not comparable to those in other countries. **Professor Kazim Bacchus** raised the issue of the marketing of education, conceding that cutting costs would probably affect quality. It was difficult anyway to measure educational output.

In response, **Mr John Lawrence** of the **British Council** referred the group to the Council's intention to transfer executive decisions about funding matters to local British Council representatives. Three consequences which could be anticipated are that the process would become less bureaucratic, institutions in the South would have a greater role in initiating programs and British institutions will find their own interests inadequately represented.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON LINKS

Before members of the expert meeting broke into groups for detailed consideration of specific issues, **Sir Roy Marshall** highlighted some of his own concerns on the nature of links and networks. He pointed out that a link is a mechanism for bringing together individuals or institutions, or a group of individuals or institutions, in pursuit of the goals or objectives which the parties to the link agree should be paramount. When such objectives are set out in detail, the link is said to be formal or structured; when not thus set out, it is said to be informal or non-structured.

Informal links are often preferred on the grounds that they allow parties greater discretion and autonomy in carrying out project aims than in formal links. On the other hand, the disadvantage of informal links is that under present circumstances they are less likely to attract funding. Links may begin in an informal way, and develop into formal links which, after project goals have been achieved, may again continue in an informal way. Personal contacts made and relationships built up during the life of the formal link may continue in an informal way even after the cessation of the formal link.

Sir Roy suggested that all links would usually have two or more parties, defined objectives, a stipulated term or duration, procedures for testing achievement (monitoring) and evaluation.

Links work best if the parties involved are allowed the greatest possible freedom in carrying out their aims. The role of the funding agency is best fulfilled if it ensures that the parties have clarified their minds about what they want and how they want to go about it. Its role thereafter should be monitoring and evaluation in accordance with procedures established in the linking agreement.

Sir Roy stressed the need to recognise that funding agencies themselves operate within a framework of policies set by their respective governments, and also that these policies often change over time - for example, the shift in orientation from institution-building to development programmes. Problems may arise when educational institutions in the South feel aggrieved when such policy changes are reflected in the activities of the funding agencies of those governments. It might be more profitable if institutions persuaded their own governments to pursue the matter with external governments with a view to promoting changes in the policy itself.

The most important characteristic of a link is the commitment of the parties to achieve agreed objectives.

An arrangement similar to links, according to Sir Roy, is the network. There are important distinctions between the two since:

- a network always involves more than two institutions,
- the flow of information is multi-directional in a network; that is, wherever the information originates, it becomes available for dissemination throughout the network; and

- it is easier to involve the private sector and non-government institutions in network activities.

WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

Members of the meeting next met in two working groups to discuss institutional links within the framework of higher educational cooperation and the aims, content and organisation of links. A number of questions were put to each group.

1. **Institutional Links Within the Framework of Higher Education Co-operation**

   (a) What are the identifying characteristics of a 'link' especially as distinct from a 'network'?

   (b) What is the place of the institutional link in the spectrum of academic interchange relationships - student mobility, staff mobility and exchange, international professional associations, international institutional associations, international research projects, for example?

   (c) Linking institutions is but one facet of the drive to pursue and sustain excellence in higher education: staff recruitment, fellowship programmes not focussed on institutional development per se, assistance to institutional infrastructure such as library services and abstracting services underpinning the educational system, and assistance to research all serve a similar purpose. What is the balance between institutional support and more generalised system support?

   (d) What is the particular merit of the institutional link, from the point of view of the funding agencies:

   - decentralisation of administration responsibility from the aid agency to the professionals?
   - closer supervision achieved by the presence of own-country personnel at host institutions?
   - apparently enhanced autonomy in decision-making by institutions?
   - integration of different forms of support in a single - apparently more efficient - package of training, research help, materials and equipment, etc.?

   (e) What other advantages might 'links' have and how important are they, as, for example:

   - an assured basis of funding by external agencies?
   - a doorway through the institutional partner to wider networks in the partner's country, or internationally?
   - a channel to the overseas partner for advice and assistance?

   (f) What are the drawbacks of the link compared with other forms of co-operation, in terms of:
   - extra administrative burdens imposed by highly-structured

educational interchange?
- exclusivity of links which may promote too narrow a range of partnership overseas?
- increasing potential for inequality in the education system between linked and unlinked programmes, departments and institutions?

(g) Is there a tendency for links to phase out as institutions mature? Are there adequate mechanisms available in funding agencies to facilitate the transition from 'development-assistance' to 'academic exchange' and provide subsequent appropriate support?

2. **Co-operation: Aims, Content and Organisation of Links**

(a) In specific terms, how should general goals of the link be translated into concrete operational objectives?

(b) How specifically should link activities be programmed and budgeted in advance, at the time of agreement?

(c) Links may cover many different fields of activity:

- joint courses
- workshops, seminars and conferences
- staff development (initial qualifications and refresher)
- research co-operation
- joint publications
- scholarly communication/assessing information
- curriculum development
- equipment, books, materials
- examinations
- 'outreach': development-oriented activities

What is the comparative advantage of links compared with other mechanisms of international support and co-operation in relation to any of these activities?

(d) Do links tend to be multifunctional or unifunctional, and what are the advantages or disadvantages of each in the context of a link?

(e) Should links have a focus on innovation? Who should decide this - the funding agency? the host government? the co-operation institutions?

(f) Are there any lessons of experience in relation to the best level of link operation - department, faculty, institution? (It all depends - but on what?)

(g) How large a role does/should the South institution play in designing the link, taking on-going decisions about project activities and the use of funds, and in monitoring and final evaluation?

(h) What institutional/sectoral/private agendas and interests must be taken into account in designing links? What safeguards, if any, need to be built-in against possible distortion of the purposes of the link?

(i) What are the views on the code of conduct suggested at the Delhi Meeting on New Directions in Student Mobility (see Appendix III)?

The summary of the answers to these questions form the conclusions of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The working groups summarised their findings and presented them at the final plenary of the meeting. They were incorporated by the plenary into its own conclusions, presented here.

1. **Institutional Links Within the Framework of Higher Education Co-operation**

   (a) The meeting agreed that 'institution' could be defined specifically as a higher education institute, college, university, faculty, or department, inter alia; or more broadly as a structured social phenomenon like a higher education system. The meeting considered that links between universities and colleges provided a valuable framework or umbrella for interchange, but not the sole framework. Support for institutional development itself did not have to flow only through the mechanism of links: other mechanisms and channels were available, including direct grant of resources to the institutions.

   (b) Not all higher education cooperation needed to be focussed on an educational institution; some might be directed to a project or programme within a single department or group of departments. On the other hand, cooperation programmes might be broader than one institution and relate to aspects of the entire national system - management of universities, staff development for affiliated colleges, support for academic journals, for example. But while recognising these other possible targets for assistance, the meeting emphasised that the impact of link programmes on institutional development should always be taken into account.

   (c) Links should not be encouraged simply for their own sake; they were not ends in themselves but rather conduits for fruitful interchange. Perhaps the major purpose of links between industrialised and developing country institutions was to strengthen the self-reliant capacity of the developing country institution so that it could carry out such functions as staff development and curriculum development itself. Even if some smaller higher education systems or individual institutions might not become self-sufficient in all of their functions, the principle of enhanced capacity for self-reliance should be stressed.

   (d) As a means of providing assistance to institutions or systems, linked relationships were felt to be efficient in encouraging devolution of decision-making and reducing to a minimum complicated channels of communication and detailed bureaucratic work. Higher education institutions throughout the Commonwealth

were accustomed to exercising autonomy and to managing sizeable resources. With a range of expertise across a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, they were in a good position, through links, to assemble viable packages of services required by partner institutions.

(e) The real value of links for institutions lay in the basis they provided for a sustained cooperative relationship, and the mutual understanding that arose from collaboration. The assurance of funding over a period of years was helpful to planning, and links had an important potential - which required conscious exploitation - for gaining access to data sources and other academic resources.

(f) Inter-institutional links were thought to be occasionally too exclusive; IDP in Australia has always had reservations on that account. There was a danger of dependence on one particular tradition of thought. Possibilities for choice could be enhanced by a diversification of link contacts, and it was incumbent on the partners to a link not to monopolise the external relations of their partner.

(g) Inequality between institutions was regarded as almost inevitable. Certainly links provided resources to an institution which gave it an advantage in relation to its peers. But this should be seen as a challenge to other institutions, and in any case cannot be prevented.

(h) Problems could arise when link support ended, especially where staff moved to other institutions and carefully nurtured institutional self-reliance was thus eroded. In this regard there was also a need for policy instruments to follow up links which might create new possibilities in relationship patterns based on greater equality.

2. Aims, Content and Organistion of Links

(a) Link arrangements should be consolidated by stating general goals at the outset. Specifying certain objective targets would ensure that constraints of staff, budget and time were also fully taken into account from the beginning.

(b) Even where links were established informally, or on the basis of direct personal contact, they should be formalised. This would ensure maximum benefit to the institution, as well as the commitment of individuals to the principles of sound scholarship and the advancement of knowledge.

(c) Stating the objectives of a link programme quite specifically at the outset would further facilitate the process of monitoring and evaluation. Targets and criteria against which to monitor and evaluate the achievements and/or failures of the link should be built into its original design.

(d) Links involved a wide variety of activities, and the design of a link would highlight one or more of these activities:

- joint courses or workshops
- joint publications
- research cooperation
- curriculum development
- staff exchange
- development of infrastructure for communication and information dissemination
- equipment, books, materials and examinations
- 'outreach' development-oriented activity

(e) Links might be the most expedient, though obviously not the only way to promote institutional development. Links at departmental and faculty levels, or through specific projects or programmes should be encouraged in addition to institutional links.

(f) Links which served a variety of purposes or functions could enhance institutional capabilities by making available a wider variety of options, and by making possible more comprehensive programmes. The scope of such links should be determined by agreed and mutually shared objectives, and by a realistic assessment of anticipated benefits.

(g) Links had a vital role to play in encouraging innovation in policy and practice within institutions. There was, however, a tendency, particularly on the part of bilateral aid programmes, to emphasise consolidation of on-going programmes which had demonstrated some success. It was desirable that some aid be attracted to link arrangements which emphasised not only consolidation but also innovation and less formal approaches to research and training.

(h) Institutions should be very clear about their priorities and the criteria which should be applied to agreements for staff exchange, research collaboration, etc. Official criteria should be used to decide whether to accept or reject packages offered by funding agencies or institutions wishing to collaborate.

(i) The proposals for operating links, outlined in Appendix III, met with general agreement. It was suggested they be described as guidelines, and that appropriate modification be made to emphasise linkages over issues of student mobility.

3. **South-South Cooperation**

(a) Existing South-South links were sometimes the outcome of a process of historical development; others resulted from a deliberate decision to establish linkages. An important form of South-South linkage was represented in the external examination system. The meeting looked at regional groupings like ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), SEAMEO (South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation) and AESAU (Association of Eastern and Southern African Universities).

(b) The increasing indigenisation of education systems posed increasing problems of language and communication. The Commonwealth could help in English language training.

(c) Some South-South links were inevitably dependent on the North for financial support.

(d) In general, regional groupings in South East Asia had not been heavily involved in higher education co-operation, with the notable exception of the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore.

(e) While the Association of Commonwealth Universities Yearbook had proved helpful, South-South cooperation would be facilitated by additional relevant information. Some way of classifying and distributing that additional information would be required, possibly through a Commonwealth agency.

(f) Examples of North-South-South links included the area studies programmes involving African and East Asian studies. Experiences on the whole had been positive, although problems were encountered in trying to overcome language barriers, in building up infrastructural - as opposed to human - resources and in perceptions of how important the North aspect of the link should be. There was, additionally, a lack of relevant information on North-South-South linkages with potential for extension into South-South links. Finally, social and economic instabilities in many countries of the South had inhibited extension of such links.

The basic condition for success was the systematic build-up of physical infrastructure - including data bases, computer facilities, etc. - to parallel the build-up of skilled human resources. The problems should not however be exaggerated unduly: they presented a surmountable challenge rather than an insurmountable obstacle.

4. Centres of Excellence

(a) It was agreed that centres of advanced training and research could develop into centres of excellence by:

- natural growth - as in the case of metallurgy at McMaster University in Canada, for example; and
- deliberate planning and injection of physical and human resources - like the Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste, set up largely through the drive of Abdus Salam or the C V Rahman Institute.

(b) The evolution and consolidation of such centres in the South might be facilitated by viable links and/or networks which could be implemented on an informal basis at departmental, faculty or institutional level. Formal university links were, however, considered to be the most appropriate basis for establishing and/or sustaining centres of excellence.

(c) In many instances, Commonwealth agencies had already identified such centres in the course of experts meetings, workshops, and the placement of students on scholarships. The Commonwealth Secretariat could help in the process of encouraging and supporting such centres in co-operation with other agencies. Regional agencies could also help in the process, although peer judgements of those directly involved could cloud issues of rankings. Private sector enterprises also had a role to play.

(d) It was agreed that centres of excellence in the South were important in redressing the imbalances in North-South linkages because they could, inter alia:

- encourage international academic exchange on a mutually beneficial basis between North and South;
- locate the focus of area studies, and the consolidation of resources existing in the South; and
- give greater impetus to South-South cooperation.

(e) Support for such centres should be as widely-based as possible, and should not be restricted to a single bilateral interest.

(f) Institutional linkages had a special role to play where centres of excellence are concerned, in that such links could help to sustain and enhance the quality of the centre.

(g) Expansion of centres of excellence should be consistent with national development plans, and the centres should be able and prepared to serve national development needs. They should make a significant contribution to social and economic development.

(h) The identification of a centre of excellence should not bring it into competition with a sister institution which already provides adequate services.

i) The criteria for centres of excellence suggested by Dr J. Edward Greene (see Appendix IV) seemed operationally useful.

The conclusions of the meeting on institutional links in higher education in the developing countries of the Commonwealth held in Bangalore, provide a blueprint for future co-operative activity between Commonwealth institutions of higher education.

APPENDIX I

PROGRAMME

SUNDAY 2 February

0900 Inauguration by Dr CNR Rao, Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

1045 Session I

Chairman: Dr L S Chandrakant

Lead Paper: Institutional Links: A Commonwealth Challenge by Kenneth King

Discussion

1330 Session II

Chairman: Sir Roy Marshall
North-South Links: Paper on their implications for the Development of Centres of Excellence in the South by Dr J Edward Greene.

Discussion

1530 South-South Links - Opportunities and Constraints: Paper on the Role of International Linkages in Promoting Education
by Prof. V.G. Kulkarni

Discussion

MONDAY 3 February

0900 Session III

Chairman: Dr J Edward Greene

Institutional and Country Perspectives on Links: Experiences of the South. Brief presentations from a panel including Dr Indraratna (Sri Lanka), Professor S Krishnaswamy (India), Mr L R Mal (India), Professor Manrakhan (Mauritius), Dr Shahidullah (Bangladesh)

1030 Break

MONDAY 3 February (continued)

1100 Session III: Discussion continued

1400 Field Trip-Visit to various departments of the Indian Institute of Science involved in institutional links and research co-operation.

1700 Reception: by the Director of the Indian Institute of Science.

TUESDAY 4 February

0900 Session IV

Chairman: Prof. Kazim Bacchus
Panel Discussion: Problems of Resourcing Links: Views from the Funding Agencies

(a)Mr Lewis Perinbam and Dr Miles Wisenthal (Canada)

(b)Mr John Lawrence (British Council)

(c)Mr Charles Noble (Australia)

1030 Break

1100 Discussion in Working Groups

1230 Lunch

1330 Discussion in Working Groups

1500 Break

1515 Discussion in Working Groups

1630 End

1830 Reception by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Hotel Ashok)

WEDNESDAY 5 February

0915 Session V
Chairman: Prof. J. Manrakhan

Presentation of Reports by working Groups

1045 Break

WEDNESDAY 5 February (continued)

1100 Discussion and Adoption of Reports (continued)

Concluding Remarks

1230 End of Meeting

APPENDIX II

List of Papers Presented and Tabled

1. Institutional Links: A Commonwealth Challenge
   by Dr Kenneth King

2. North-South Links: Their Implication for the Development of Centres of Excellence in the South.
   by Dr J Edward Greene

3. South-South Links: The Role of International Linkages in Promoting Education.
   by Professor V.G. Kulkarni

4. Institutional Links in Higher Education in Developing Countries: The Malaysian Case.
   by Dr Hena Mukherjee

5. Institutional Links - Sri Lankan Experience.
   by Professor A D V de S Indraratna

6. Report of the Working Group on Links: Final Draft of Document CICHE Report 1/86.

7. The Role of Commonwealth Scientific Co-operation in Institution-Building.
   by Professor J.I. Furtado (Commonwealth Science Council)

APPENDIX III

Some Guidelines for Ensuring Satisfactory Operation of Links

i) At the crucial initial stage, it is important to negotiate some degree of openness and diversity of link partners both North and South, and thus reduce monopolising tendencies in link arrangements.

ii) Also at this initial stage, it is important to build in a mechanism that can allow the link to mature and the relationship to change over time.

iii) The student mobility implications of links are particularly important to this meeting, but it should be noted that the student mobility agenda may be seen differently in North and South. Care should be taken that the desire to monopolise the overseas graduate training of Southern link faculty does not distort the larger potential of a link, and restrict it to a training relationship.

iv) Links can act to institute a flow of students, to confirm an existing informal student flow, or even to monopolise a student flow. It is also possible that a few years of student flow through aided link schemes can lead to students continuing to go to those same overseas institutions unaided, when the links are formally completed.

v) The various elements of training, in-service or sabbatical, in both directions do need to be laid out so that it is clear in what direction the trajectory of the link will head. Split-site training, for example, may be easily envisaged in a link that is relatively mature but not one that is just starting up.

vi) The link need, to be rather specific about the way in which some of the advantages of the Northern 'information-based' academic life can be shared. It is important, as a corollary, to guard against the privatisation of resources and academic tourism. At this point, it becomes important to distinguish between the different obligations to one's university or college there may be in an informal link and a formal link. In all circumstances, academic standards and autonomy should be safeguarded.

APPENDIX IV

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE (GREENE'S CRITERIA)

1. Centres of Excellence presuppose:

   a) pre-eminence in one or several areas in research and training

   b) international recognition for outstanding work in particular fields of scholarly endeavour.

2. To acquire and sustain such recognition requires:

   a) infrastructure to accommodate and attract scholars whose reputations in turn enhance the knowledge distribution associated with the specific centre

   b) an active publications programme, especially an in-house journal and seminars or internationally acclaimed workshops.

   c) a cadre of scholars whose work make a significant contribution to the development process in their national/regional/ international contexts respectively

3. Centres of excellence may best be established and sustained especially in the South by pooling scarce resources through the building of institutional links and regional/international networks: the resulting focal points in the South will serve as poles of attraction for scholars, students and practitioners.

4. The most appropriate long term funding strategy to facilitate the emergence of such centres is to place emphasis on institution building as follows:

   a) Give less aid to general level studies and help to build programmes or institutions to meet new needs of development;

   b) Give more aid to institutions that are identified as centres of excellence especially in fields that will promote and analyse the development strategies of nations and that blend basic and applied research;

   c) allocate a percentage of funds to finance experimental projects, thereby sponsoring 'creativity';

   d) help local institutions to build up better documentation and data collection facilities in order that they become less dependent on such sources in the North and are able to monitor and evaluate their own situations;

   e) place emphasis on international exchange of information especially concerning innovations, such as 'distance' education as an alternative teaching method using radio and television;

   f) give some priority to those programmes which link research and training in the context of 'research and development'.

APPENDIX V

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

AUSTRALIA

Mr Charles Noble
Programme Manager
Fellowship Programme
International Development Programme
Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee
P O Box 1142
Canberra City, ACT 2601
Australia

BANGLADESH

Dr Shahidullah
Secretary
University Grants Commission
c/o Ministry of Education & Cultural Affairs
Government of Bangladesh
Dhaka
Bangladesh

BRITAIN

Dr Kenneth King
University of Edinburgh
Department of Education
10 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9JT

Mr John Lawrence
Higher Education Division
British Council
10 Spring Gardens
London SWIA 2BN

CANADA

Professor Kazim Bacchus
Department of International and Comparative Education
Institute of Education
University of London
Bedford Way
London WC1H OAL

Mr Lewis Perinbam
Vice-President
Canadian International Development Agency
200 Promenade du Portage
Hull, Quebec
Canada KIA OG4

Sir Roy Marshall
4 Thorpe Leys
Lockington
North Humberside
Y025 9SP

Dr Miles Wisenthal
International Development Office
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
151 Slater Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada KIP 5NI

INDIA

Professor V G Kulkarni
Hombi Bhabha Centre for Science Education
Tata Institute of Fundamental Research
Hombi Bhabha Road
Calaba, Bombay 400005
India

Professor S Krishnaswamy
Vice-Chancellor
Majurai Kamaraj University
Mandurai, India

Professor C N R Rao
Director
Indian Institute of Science
Bangalore
560012
India

Professor D P Sen Gupta
Department of Electrical Engineering
Indian Institute of Science
Bangalore 560012
India

Mr L R Mal
Deputy Secretary
University Grants Commission
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110002
India

JAMAICA

Dr Edward Greene
Head, Institute of Social & Economic Research
University of the West Indies
Mona, Kingston 7
Jamaica

MALAYSIA

Dr Hena Mukherjee
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Malaya
Pantai Valley
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

MAURITIUS

Director
Professor J Manrakhan
Vice-Chancellor
University of Mauritius
Reduit
Mauritius

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Dr M Pourhosseini
Manpower Scholarship Division
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
Department of Education
Waigani, Private Mail Bag
P O Boroko
Papua New Guinea

SRI LANKA

Professor A D V de S Indraratna
Director, Planning and Research
University Grants Commission
No. 20 Ward Place
Colombo
Sri Lanka

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Mr Peter Williams
Director, Education Programme

Dr V Selvaratnam
Head, Higher Education Unit
Education Programme

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX

0322d/0067d